

The Chalice of Courage

Being the Story of Certain Persons
Who Drank of it and Conquered
A Romance of Colorado
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"The Island of Regeneration,"
"The Better Man," "Hearts and
the Highway," "As the Sparks
Fly Upward," etc., etc.
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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Edith Maitland, a frank, free and unspoiled young Philadelphia girl, is taken to the Colorado mountains by her uncle, Robert Maitland. James Armstrong, Maitland's protégé, falls in love with her.

CHAPTER II.—His persistent wooing thrills the girl, but she hesitates, and Armstrong goes east on business without a definite answer.

CHAPTER III.—Enid hears the story of a mining engineer, Newbold, whose wife fell off a cliff and was so seriously hurt that he was compelled to shoot her to prevent her being eaten by wolves while he went for help.

CHAPTER III.

The Story and the Letters.

Imagine, if you please, the forest primeval; yes, the murmuring pines and the hemlocks of the poem as well, by the side of a rapidly rushing mountain torrent fed by the eternal snows of the lofty peaks of the great range. A level stretch of grassy land where a mountain brook joined the creek was dotted with clumps of pines and great boulders rolled down from the everlasting hills—half an acre of open clearing. On the opposite side of the brook the canon wall rose almost sheer for perhaps five hundred feet, ending in jagged, needle-edged pinnacles of rock, sharp, picturesque and beautiful. A thousand feet above ran the timber line, and four thousand feet above that the crest of the greatest peak in the main range.

The white tents of the little encampment which had gleamed so brightly in the clear air and radiant sunshine of Colorado, now stood dim and ghost-like in the red reflection of a huge campfire. It was the evening of the first day in the wilderness.

For two days since leaving the wagon, the Maitland party with its long train of burros heavily packed, its horsemen and the steady plodders on foot, had advanced into unexplored and almost inaccessible retreats of the mountains—into the primitive indeed! In this delightful spot they had pitched their tents and the permanent camp had been made. Wood was abundant, the water at hand was as cold as ice, as clear as crystal and as soft as milk. There was pasture for the horses and burros on the other side of the mountain brook. The whole place was a little amphitheater which humanity occupied perhaps the first time since creation.

Unpacking the burros, setting up the tents, making the camp, building the fire, had used up the late remainder of the day which was theirs when they had arrived. Opportunity would come tomorrow to explore the country, to climb the range, to try the stream that tumbled down a succession of waterfalls to the right of the camp and roared and rushed merrily around its feet until, swelled by the volume of the brook, it lost itself in tree-clad depths far beneath. Tonight rest after labor, tomorrow play after rest.

The evening meal was over. Enid could not help think with what scorn and contempt her father would have regarded the menu, how his gorge would have risen—hers, too, for that matter!—had it been placed before him on the old colonial mahogany of the dining-room in Philadelphia. But up there in the wilds she had eaten the coarse homely fare with the zest and relish of the most seasoned ranger of the hills. Anxious to be of service, she had burned her hands and smoked her hair and scorched her face by usurping the functions of the young ranchman who had been brought along as cook, and had actually fried the bacon herself! Imagine a goddess with a frying pan! The black thick coffee and the condensed milk, drunk from the granite ware cup, had a more delicious aroma and a more delightful taste than the finest Mocha and Java in the daintiest porcelain of France. Optimum condimentum. The girl was frankly ravenously hungry, the air, the altitude, the exertion, the excitement made her able to eat anything and enjoy it.

She was gloriously beautiful, too; even her brief experience in the west had brought back the missing roses to her cheek, and had banished the bistre circles from beneath her eyes. Robert Maitland, lazily reclining propped up against a boulder, his feet

to the fire, smoking an old pipe that would have given his brother the horrors, looked with approving com-



She Actually Fried the Bacon Herself.

placency upon her, confident and satisfied that his prescription was working well. Nor was he the only one who looked at her that way. Marlon and Emma, his two daughters, worshipped their handsome Philadelphia cousin and they sat one on either side of her on the great log lying between the tents and the fire. Even Bob Junior condescended to give her approving glances. The whole camp was at her feet. Mrs. Maitland had been greatly taken by her young niece. Kirkby made no secret of his devotion, Arthur Bradshaw and Henry Phillips, each a "tenderfoot" of the extremist character, friends of business connections in the east, who were spending their vacation with Maitland, shared in the general devotion; to say nothing of George the cook and Pete, the packer and horse wrangler.

Phillips, who was an old acquaintance of Enid's, had tried his luck with her back east and had sense enough to accept as final his failure. Bradshaw was a solemn young man without that keen sense of humor which was characteristic of the west. The others were suitably dressed for adventure, for Bradshaw's idea of an appropriate costume was distinguished chiefly by long green felt puttees which swathed his huge calves and excited curious inquiry and ribald comment from the surprised denizens of each mountain hamlet through which they had passed, to all of which Bradshaw remained serenely oblivious. The young man, who does enter especially into this tale, was a vestryman of the church in his home in the suburbs of Philadelphia. His piety had been put to a severe strain in the mountains.

That day everybody had to work on the trail—everybody wanted to for that matter. The hardest labor consisted in the driving of the burros. Unfortunately there was no good and trained leader among them through an unavoidable mistake, and the campers had great difficulty in keeping the burros on the trail. To Arthur Bradshaw had been allotted the most obstinate, cross-grained and determined of the unruly band, and old Kirkby and George paid particular attention to instructing him in the gentle art of manipulating him over the rocky mountain trail.

"Well," said Kirkby with his somewhat languid, drawling, nasal voice, "that there burro's like a ship 'tch I often seed 'em w'en I was a kid down east afore I come out to God's country. Nature has pervided 'em with a kind of a hellum. I remember if you wanted the boat to go to the right you shoved the hellum over to the left. Sta'board an' port was the terms as I recollects 'em. It's jest the same with burros, you takes 'em by the tiller, that's by the tail, git a good tight twist on it an' ef you want him to head to the right, slew his stern sheets around to the left, an' you got to be keeful you don't git no kick back 'tch ef it lands on you is worse 'n the ree-coli of a mule."

Arthur faithfully followed direc-

tions, narrowly escaping the outraged brute's small but sharp pointed heels on occasion. His efforts not being productive of much success, finally in his despair he resorted to brute strength; he would pick the little animal up bodily, pack and all—he was a man of powerful physique—and swing him around until his head pointed in the right direction; then with a prayer that the burro would keep it there for a few rods anyway, he would set him down and start him all over again. The process oft repeated became monotonous after awhile. Arthur was a slow thinking man, deliberate in action; he stood it as long as he possibly could. Kirkby, who rode one horse and led two others, and therefore was exempt from burro driving, observed him with great interest. He and Bradshaw had strayed way behind the rest of the party.

At last Arthur's resistance, patience and piety, strained to the breaking point, gave way suddenly. Primitive instincts rose to the surface and overwhelmed him like a flood. He deliberately sat down on a fallen tree by the side of a trail, the burro halting obediently, turned and faced him with hanging head, apparently conscious that he merited the disapprobation that was being heaped upon him, for from the desperate tenderfoot there burst forth so amazing, so fluent, so comprehensive a torrent of assorted profanity, that even the old past master in obfuscation was astonished and bewildered. Where did Bradshaw, mild and inoffensive, get it? His proficiency would have appalled his rector and amazed his fellow vestrymen. Not the Jackdaw of Rheims himself was so cursed as that little burro. Kirkby sat on his horse in fits of silent laughter until the tears ran down his cheek, the only outward and visible expression of his mirth.

Arthur only stopped when he had thoroughly emptied himself, possibly of an accumulation of years of repression.

"Wall," said Kirkby, "you sure do overmatch any one I ever heard w'en it comes to cursin'; w'y, you could gimme cards an' spades an' beat me, an' I was thought to have some gift that-a-way in the old days."

"I didn't begin to exhaust myself," answered Bradshaw, shortly, "and what I did say didn't equal the situation. I'm going home."

"I wouldn't do that," urged the old man. "Here, you take the horses an' I'll tackle the burro."

"Gladly," said Arthur. "I would rather ride an elephant and drive a herd of them than waste another minute on this infernal little mule."

The story was too good to keep, and around the camp fire that night Kirkby drawled it forth. There was a freedom and easiness of intercourse in the camp, which was natural enough. Cook, teamster, driver, host, guest, men, women, children, and I had almost said burros, stood on the same level. They all ate and lived together. The higher up the mountain range you go, the deeper into the wilderness you plunge, the further away from the



"It Was in These Very Mountains," Said Robert Maitland.

conventional you draw, the more homogeneous becomes society and the less obvious are the irrational and unscientific distinctions of the lowlands. The guinea stamp fades and the man and the woman are pure gold or base metal inherently and not by any artificial standard.

George, the cattle man, who cooked, and Pete, the horse wrangler, who assisted Kirkby in looking after the stock, enjoyed the episode uproariously, and would fain have had the exact language repeated to them, but here Robert Maitland demurred, much to Arthur's relief, for he was thoroughly humiliated by the whole performance. It was very pleasant lounging around the camp fire and one good story easily led to another.

"It was in these very mountains," said Robert Maitland, at last, when his turn came, "that there happened one of the strangest and most terrible ad-

ventures that I ever heard of. I have pretty much forgotten the lay of the land, but I think it wasn't very far from here that there is one of the most stupendous canons through the range; nobody ever goes there; I don't suppose anybody has ever been there since. It must have been at least five years ago that it all happened."

"It was four years an' nine months exactly, Bob," drawled old Kirkby, who well knew what was coming.

"Yes, I dare say you are right. I was up at Evergreen at the time looking after timber interests, when a

mule came wandering into the camp, saddle and pack still on his back."

"I knowed that there mule," said Kirkby, "I'd sold it to a feller named Newbold, that had come out yere an' married Louise Rosser, old man Rosser's daughter, an' him dead, an' bein' an' orphan an' this feller bein' a fine young man from the east, not a bit of a tenderfoot nuther, a minin' engineer he called hisself."

"Well, I happened to be there, too, you remember," continued Maitland, "and they made up a party to go and hunt up the man, thinking something might have happened."

"You see," explained Kirkby, "we was all mighty fond of Louise Rosser, the hull camp was actin' like a father to her at the time, so long 's she hadn't nobody else; we was all at the weddin', too, some six months afore. The gal married him on her own hook, of course nobody makin' her, but somehow she didn't seem none too happy, although Newbold, who was a perfect gent, treated her white as far as we knowed."

The old man stopped again and resumed his pipe.

"Kirkby, you tell the story," said Maitland.

"Not me," said Kirkby. "I have seen men shot afore for takin' words out 'n other men's mouths an' I ain't never done that yit."

"You always were one of the most silent men I ever saw," laughed George. "Why, that day Pete yere got shot accidental an' had his whole breast tore out w'en we was lumbering over on Black Mountain, all you said was, 'Wash him off, put some axle grease on him an' tie him up.'"

"That's so," answered Pete, "an' there must have been somethin' powerful soothin' in that axle grease, for here I am safe an' sound to this day."

"It takes an old man," assented Kirkby, "to know when to keep his mouth shut. I learned it at the muzzle of a gun."

"I never knew before," laughed Maitland, "how still a man you can be. Well, to resume the story, having nothing to do I went out with the posse the sheriff gathered up—"

"Him not thinkin' there had been any foul play," ejaculated the old man. "No, certainly not."

"Well, what happened, Uncle Bob?" inquired Enid.

"Just you wait," said young Bob, who had heard the story. "This is an awful good story, Cousin Enid."

"I can't wait much longer," returned the girl. "Please go on."

"Two days after we left the camp, we came across an awful figure, ragged, blood stained, wasted to a skeleton, starved—"

"I have seed men in extreme cases afore," interposed Kirkby, "but never none like him."

"Nor I," continued Maitland. "Was it Newbold?" asked Enid.

"Yes."

"And what had happened to him?"

"He and his wife had been prospecting in these very mountains; she had fallen over a cliff and broken herself so terribly that Newbold had to shoot her."

"What!" exclaimed Bradshaw. "You don't mean that he actually killed her?"

"That's what he done," answered old Kirkby.

"Poor man," murmured Enid. "But why?" asked Phillips.

"They were five days away from a settlement, there wasn't a human being within a hundred and fifty miles of them, not even an Indian," continued Maitland. "She was so frightfully broken and mangled that he couldn't carry her away."

"But why couldn't he leave her and go for help?" asked Bradshaw.

"The wolves, the bears, or the vultures would have got her. These woods and mountains were full of them then and there are some of them left now I guess."

The two little girls crept closer to their big cousin, each casting anxious glances beyond the fire light.

"Oh, you're all right, little gals," said Kirkby reassuringly, "they wouldn't come nigh us while this fire is burnin' an' they 've been pretty well hunted out I guess; 'sides there's men yere who'd like nothin' better 'n drawin' a bead on a big b'ar."

"And so," continued Maitland, "when she begged him to shoot her, to put her out of her misery, he did so and then he started back to the settlement to tell his story and stumbled on us looking after him."

"What happened then?"

"I went back to the camp," said

Maitland. "We loaded Newbold on a mule and took him with us; he was so crazy he didn't know what was happening; he went over the shooting again and again in his delirium. It was awful."

"Did he die?"

"I don't think so," was the answer, "but really I know nothing further about him. There were some good women in that camp; we put him in their hands and I left shortly afterwards."

"I kin tell the rest," said old Kirkby. "Knowin' more about the mountains than most people hereabouts I led the men that didn't go back with Bob an' Newbold to the place w'ere he said his woman fell, an' there we found her, her body leas'tways."

"But the wolves?" queried the girl.

"He'd drug her into a kind of a holler and piled rocks over her. He'd gone down into the canon, w'ich was something frightful, an' then climbed up to w'ere she'd lodged. We had plenty of rope, havin' brought it along a purpose, an' we let ourselves down to the shelf where she was a lyin'."

We wrapped her body up in blankets an' roped it an' finally drug her up on the old Injun trail, leas'tways I suppose it was made afore there was any Injuns, an' brought her back to Evergreen camp, w'ich the only thing about it that was green was the swing doors on the saloon. We got a parson out from Denver an' give her a Christian burial."

"Is that all?" asked Enid as the old man paused again.

"Nope."

"Oh, the man?" exclaimed the woman with quick intuition.

"He recovered his senses so they told us, an' w'en we got back he'd gone."

"Where?" was the instant question. Old Kirkby stretched out his hands. "Don't ax me," he said, "he'd jest gone. I ain't never seed or heard of him sence. Poor little Louise Rosser, she did have a hard time."

"Yes," said Enid, "but I think the man had a harder time than she. He loved her?"

"It looked like it," answered Kirkby. "If you had seen him, his remorse, his anguish, his horror," said Maitland, "you wouldn't have had any doubt about it. But it is getting late. In the mountains everybody gets up at daybreak. Your sleeping bags are in the tents, ladies; time to go to bed."

As the party broke up, old Kirkby rose slowly to his feet; he looked meaningly toward the young woman, upon whom the spell of the tragedy still lingered, he nodded toward the young brook, and then repeated his speaking glance at her. His meaning was patent, although no one else had seen the covert invitation.

"Come, Kirkby," said the girl in quick response, "you shall be my escort. I want a drink before I turn in. No, never mind," she said, as Bradshaw and Phillips both volunteered. "not this time."

The old frontiersman and the young girl strolled off together. They stopped by the brink of the rushing torrent a few yards away. The noise that it made drowned the low tones of their voices and kept the others, busy preparing to retire, from hearing what they said.

"That ain't quite all the story, Miss Enid," said the old trapper meaningly. "There was another man."

"What!" exclaimed the girl.

"Oh, there wasn't nothin' wrong



"Read the Letters," He Said.

with Louise Rosser, w'ich she was Louise Newbold, but there was another man; I suspected it afore, that's why she was sad. W'en we found her body I knowed it."

"I don't understand."

To be continued.

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